DK READERS

BEGINNING 2 TO READ ALONE

SPACE QUEST

MISSION TO MARS

PETER LOCK

A Note to Parents

DK READERS is a compelling program for beginning readers, designed in conjunction with leading literacy experts, including Dr. Linda Gambrell, Distinguished Professor of Education at Clemson University.
Dr. Gambrell has served as President of the National Reading Conference, the College Reading Association, and the International Reading Association.

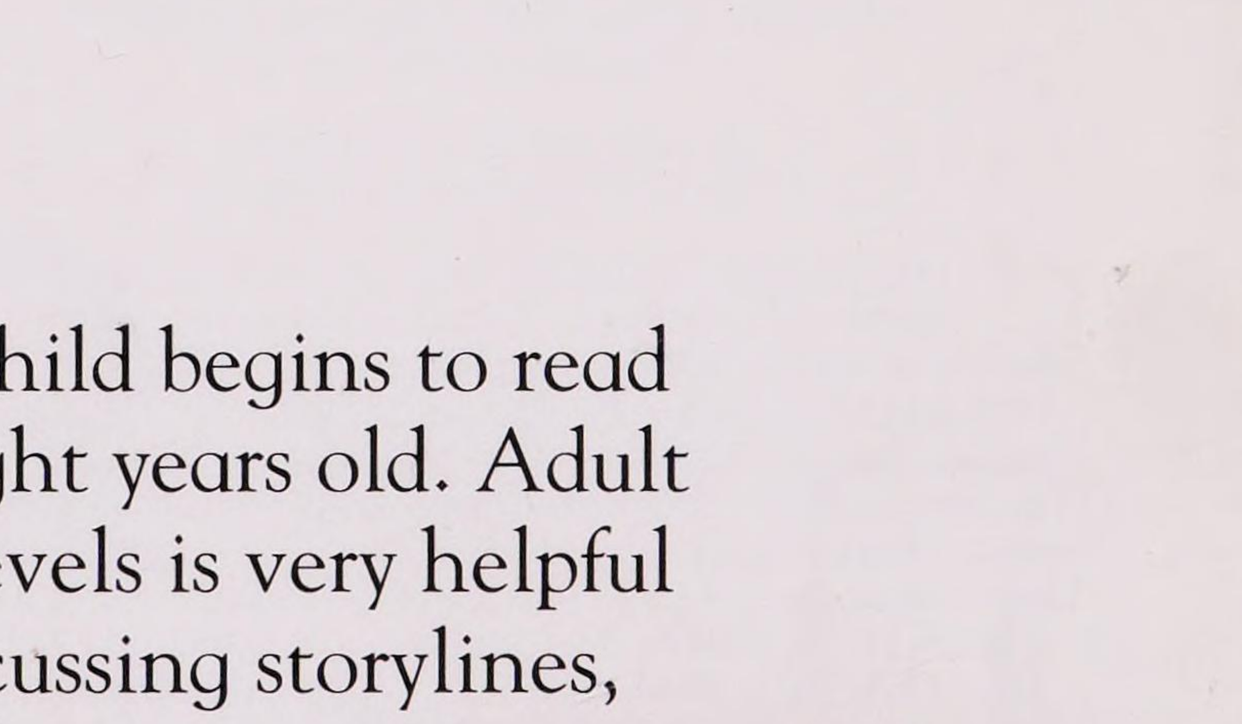
Beautiful illustrations and superb full-color photographs combine with engaging, easy-to-read stories to offer a fresh approach to each subject in the series. Each DK READER is guaranteed to capture a child's interest while developing his or her reading skills, general knowledge, and love of reading.

The five levels of DK READERS are aimed at different reading abilities, enabling you to choose the books that are exactly right for your child:

Pre-level 1: Learning to read
Level 1: Beginning to read
Level 2: Beginning to read alone
Level 3: Reading alone
Level 4: Proficient readers

The "normal" age at which a child begins to read can be anywhere from three to eight years old. Adult participation through the lower levels is very helpful for providing encouragement, discussing storylines, and sounding out unfamiliar words.

No matter which level you select, you can be sure that you are helping your child learn to read, then read to learn!



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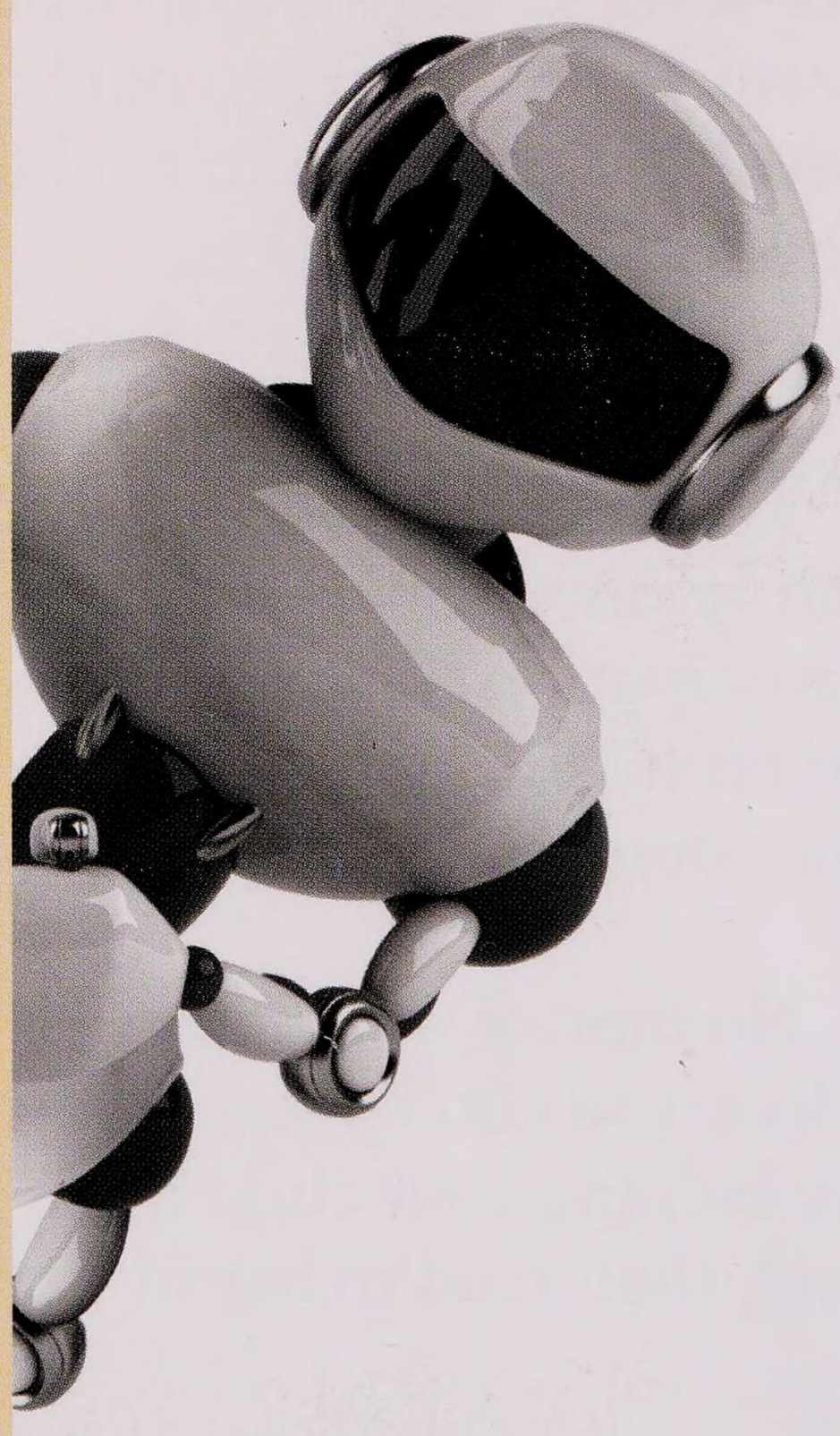


DK READERS

BEGINNING TO READ ALONE 2

Space Quest

Mission to Mars

Written by Peter Lock

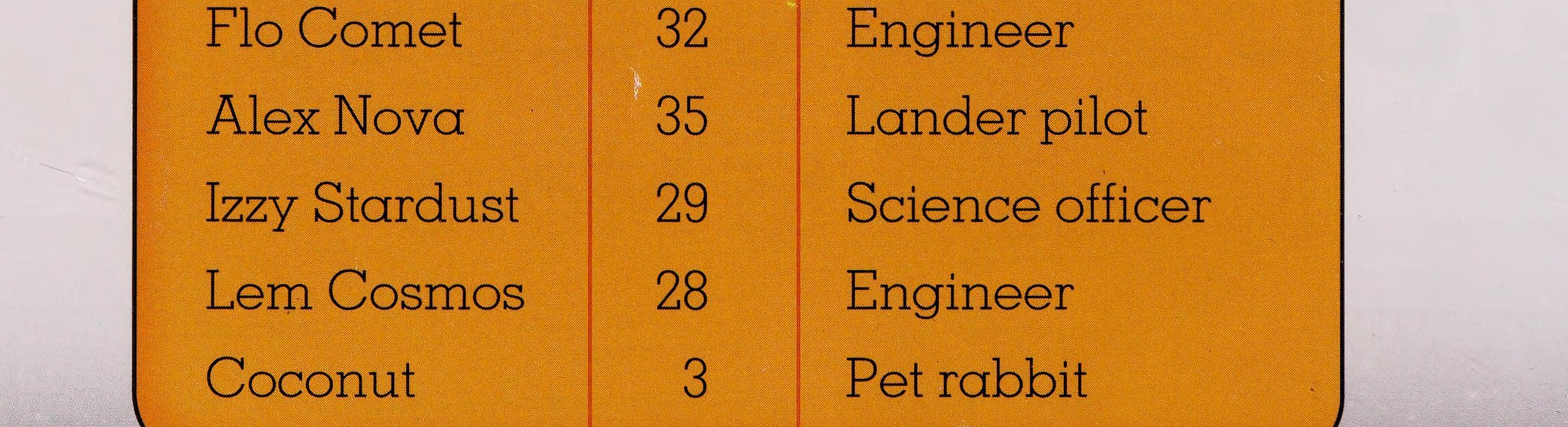
Year 2050

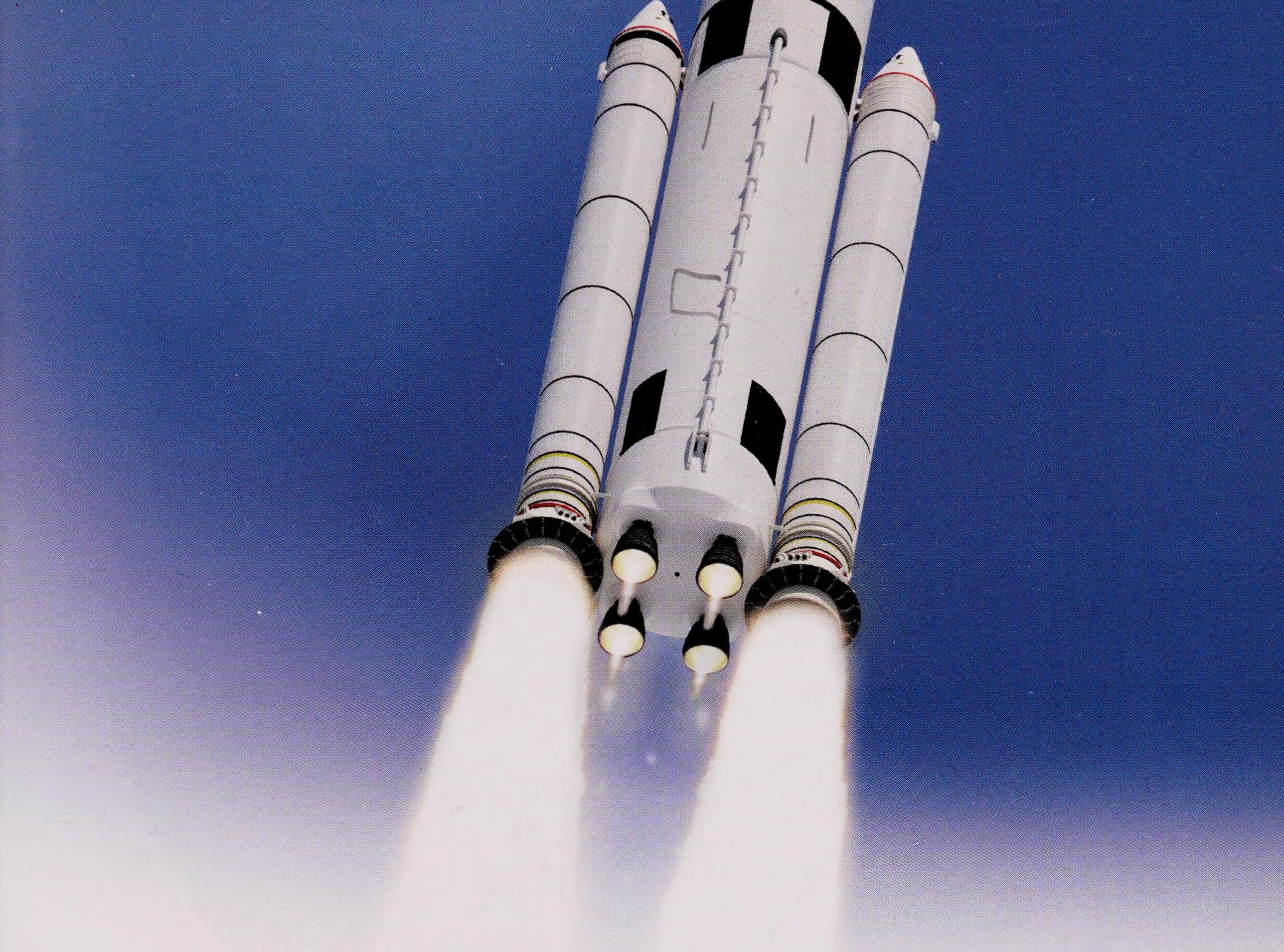
Five astronauts crawled into the command capsule at the top of a rocket. They were about to set off on an exciting mission: Space Quest.

The aim was to visit the planets of the solar system to collect samples and set up bases, if possible. The first stage was to Mars.

Mission team

Name	Age	Role
Ned Crater	41	Commander
Flo Comet	32	Engineer
Alex Nova	35	Lander pilot
Izzy Stardust	29	Science officer
Lem Cosmos	28	Engineer
Coconut	3	Pet rabbit





"We have lift-off," said Ned.

The rocket zoomed upward. Jets of fire and billows of smoke blazed behind.The capsule shook violently.

In the hold, Coconut the pet rabbit lay curled up, resting in her special space hutch. She opened one eye, stirred, and then snuggled up again. This shaking was just like all the launch tests.

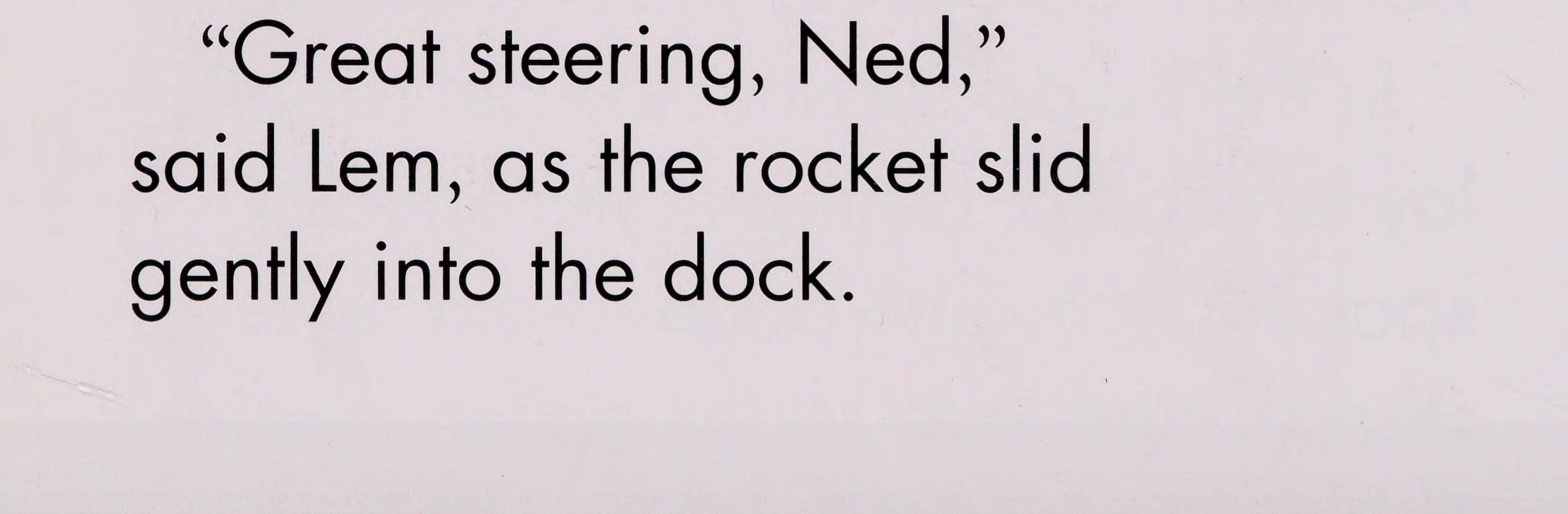
The rocket zoomed through the atmosphere. The launch engines dropped away.

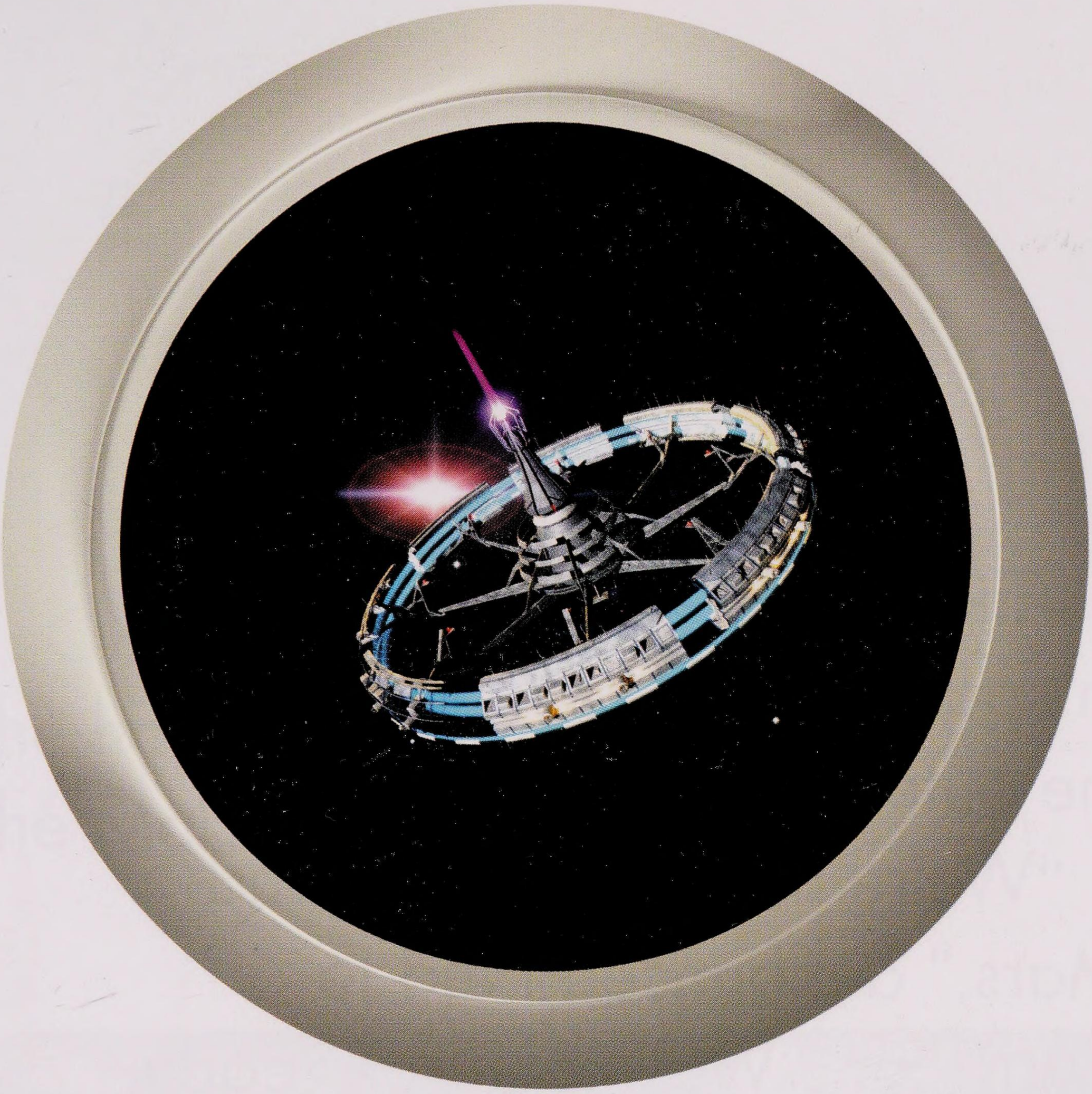
As it entered outer space, the rocket leveled out. It sped toward the spacecraft *Ramesses*.

"Look guys! *Ramesses* is fantastic," said Flo, looking at the spacecraft ahead.

Ned took over the rocket's controls as they came close. He steered the rocket toward the docking hatch.

"Great steering, Ned," said Lem, as the rocket slid gently into the dock.



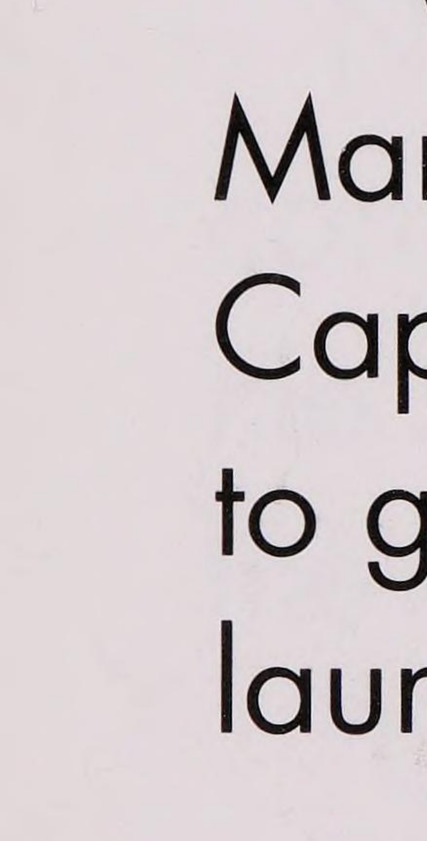


Ned pressed the switch to shut down the rocket's engines.

"Welcome to your new home!" said Ned.

After seven months traveling in space, *Ramesses* reached the outer atmosphere of Mars.

"We're now in orbit around Mars," announced Ned to CapCom. "We should be ready to go for the landing-capsule launch soon."

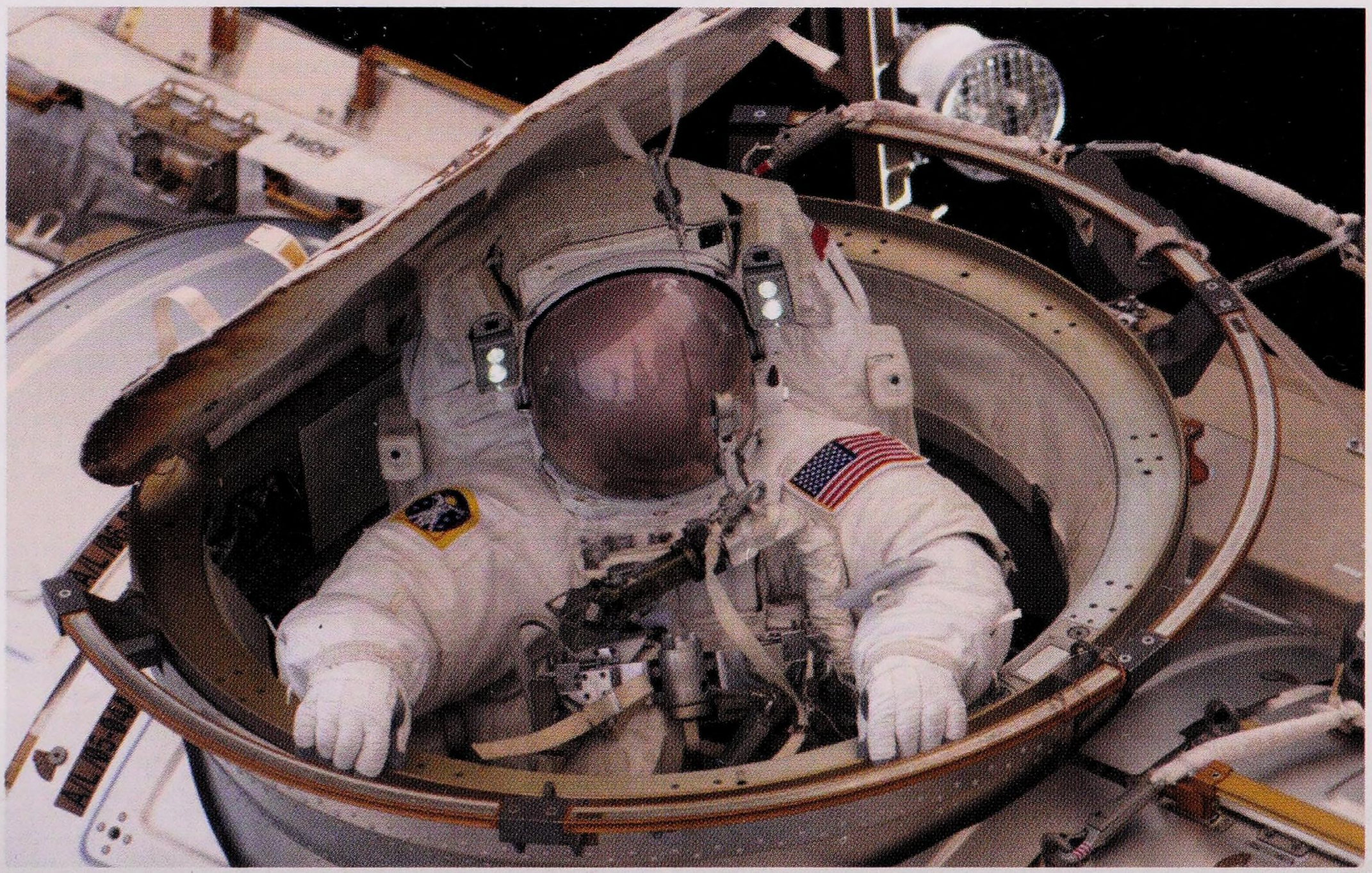


CapCom is for Capsule or Spacecraft Communicator. This is the only person at Mission Control on Earth who speaks with the astronauts.

Flo was helping Alex, Lem, and Izzy get into their suits for Mars.

"These boots will keep our feet cozy from the Martian cold," said Lem. He pulled on the boots with heated soles.

Once ready, they opened the hatch door and walked into the Mars lander, *Memphis*.

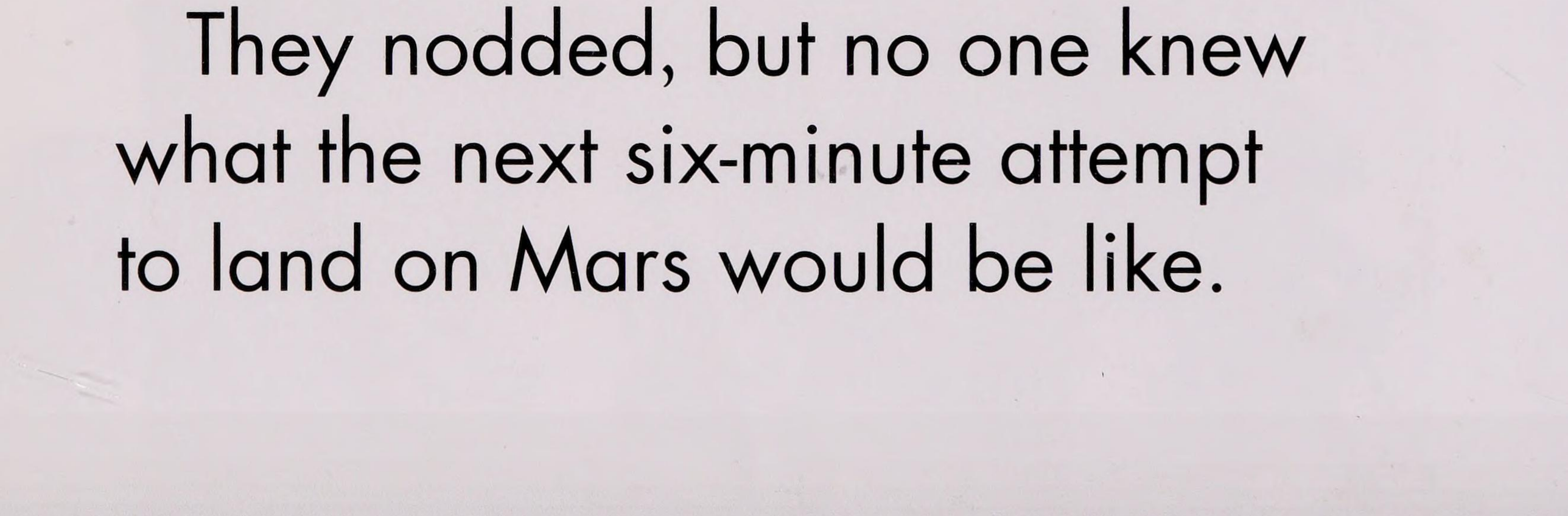


"Good luck," said Flo, waving goodbye to them as she closed the hatch. She and Ned were staying on board *Ramesses*.

Alex sat at the controls of *Memphis*. "Let's get this mission underway," he said. He guided *Memphis* away from the dock and rotated the heat shield toward the planet's surface.

"Are you ready for the ride of your lives?" he asked Lem and Izzy.

They nodded, but no one knew what the next six-minute attempt to land on Mars would be like.



Memphis streaked through
the Mars atmosphere.
Outside, the heat shield was
as hot as the Sun's surface,
but inside, the temperature
stayed cool.

Coconut munched on some
lettuce in her space hutch.

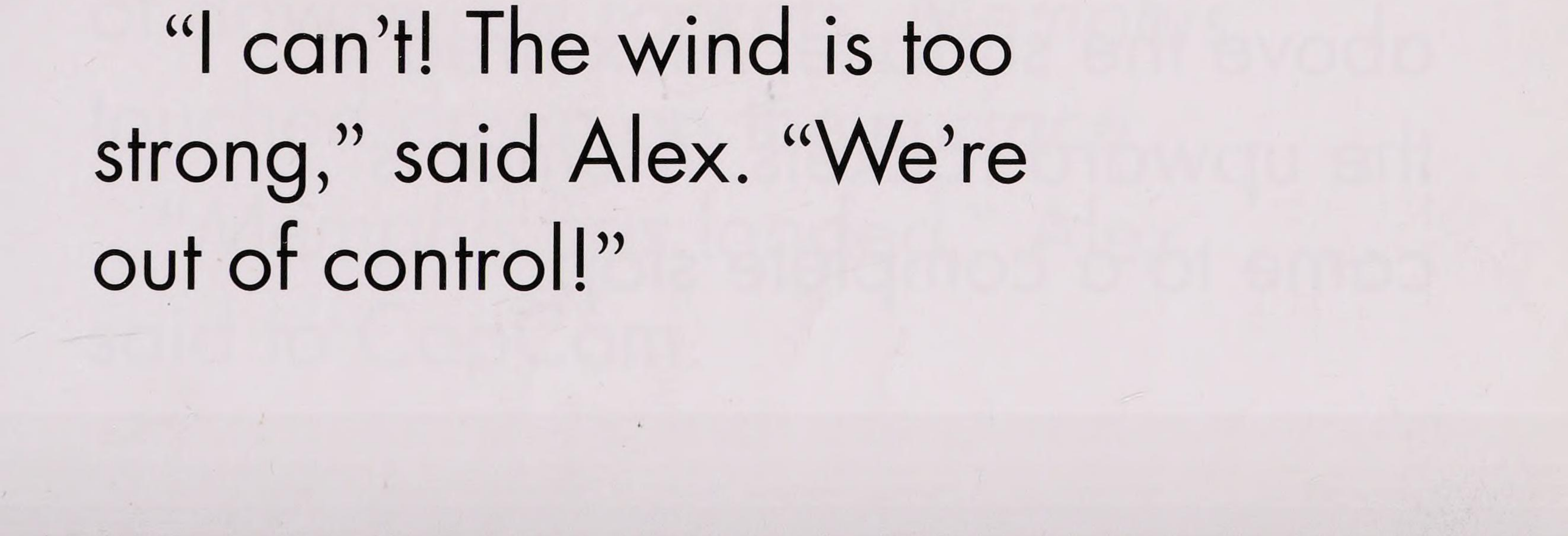
Four minutes later, Alex launched the huge parachute. It billowed out behind *Memphis*, slowing the lander down.

"This really is a strange colored sky," remarked Izzy. Mars was covered in an orange-red afternoon haze.

Suddenly, a strong gust of wind caught *Memphis*, and the lander swerved. They were right above a huge volcano. A fiery glowing lava flow oozed out of the crater below them.

"Alex, do something quickly," cried Izzy. "We're heading straight for that lava flow."

"I can't! The wind is too strong," said Alex. "We're out of control!"



Alex, Lem, and Izzy were being tossed around like clothes in a dryer.

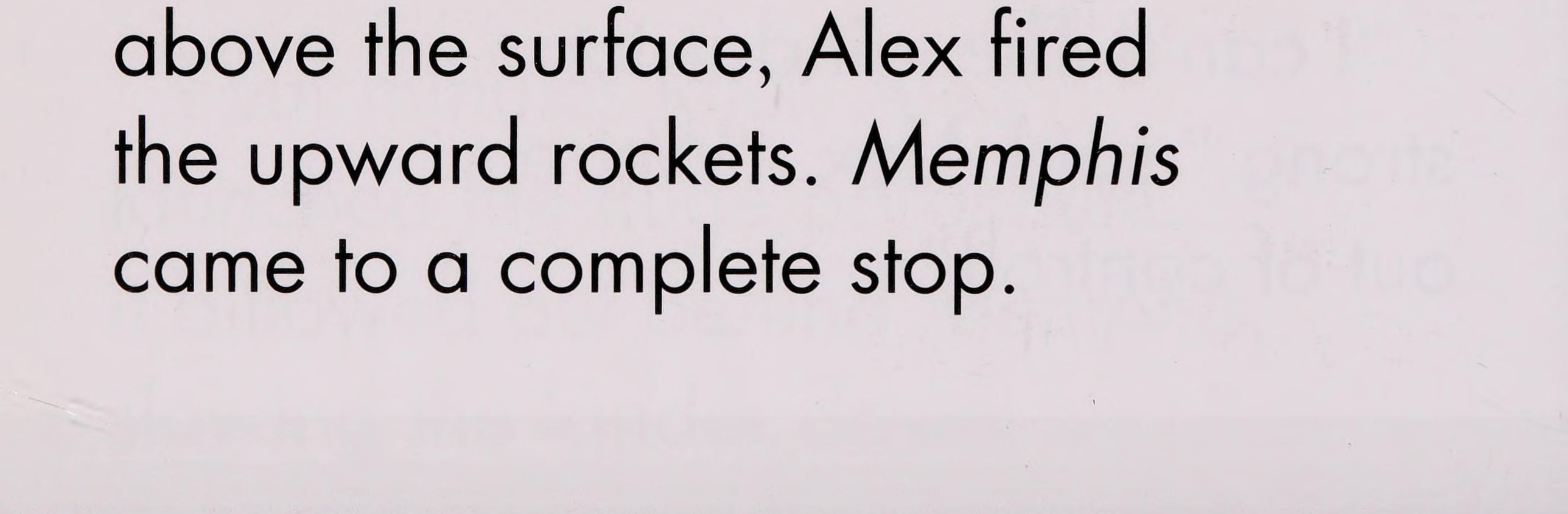
Suddenly, the wind changed direction, lifting the lander's large parachute.

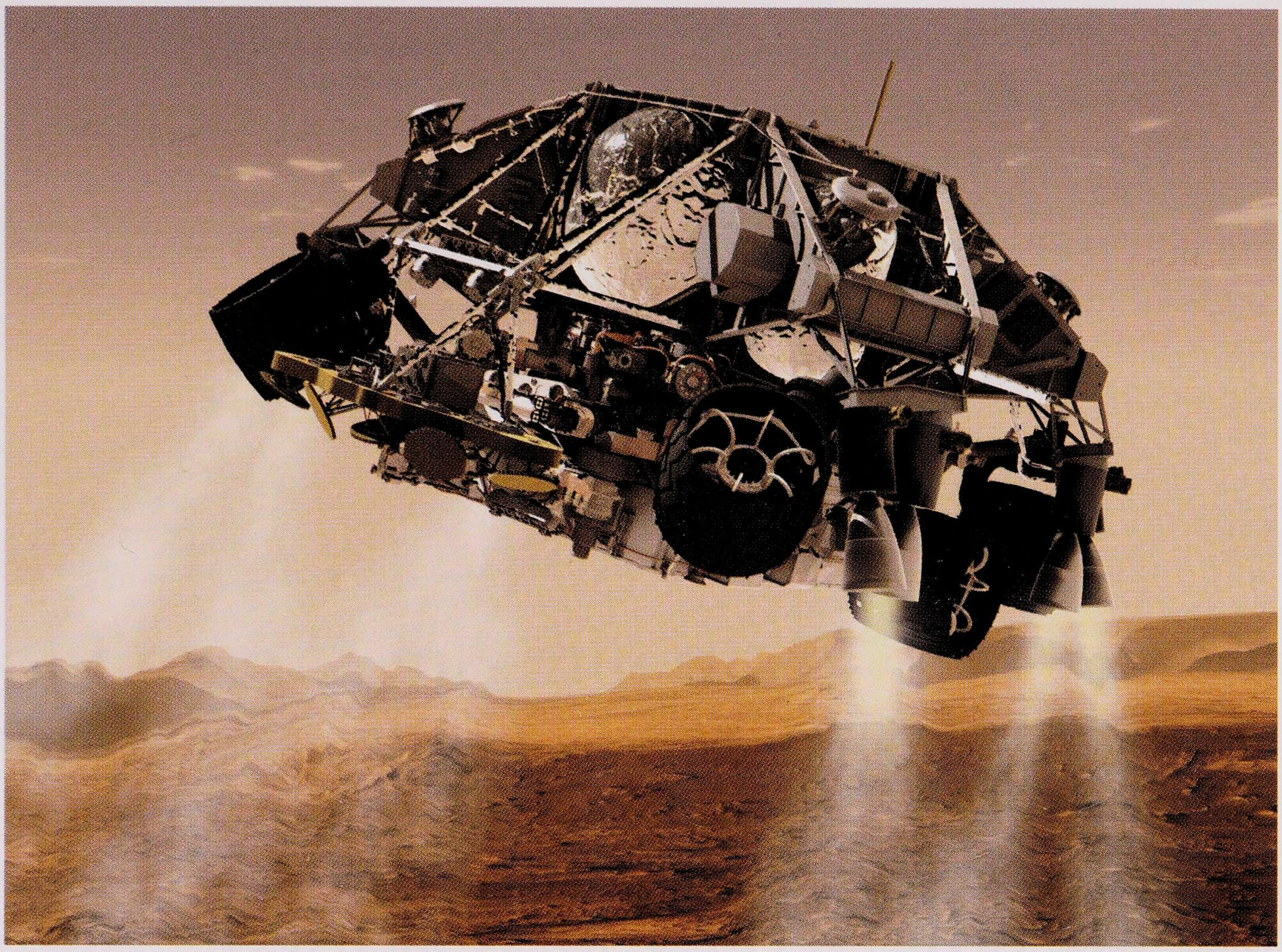
Memphis floated away from the danger of the main crater.

Alex regained control as the wind died down.

"Phew! Perhaps we can land more safely now."

At 50 feet (15 meters) above the surface, Alex fired the upward rockets. *Memphis* came to a complete stop.





The parachute detached, and wheels beneath the lander lowered. Alex fired short boosts of downward rockets. *Memphis* touched down on the surface.

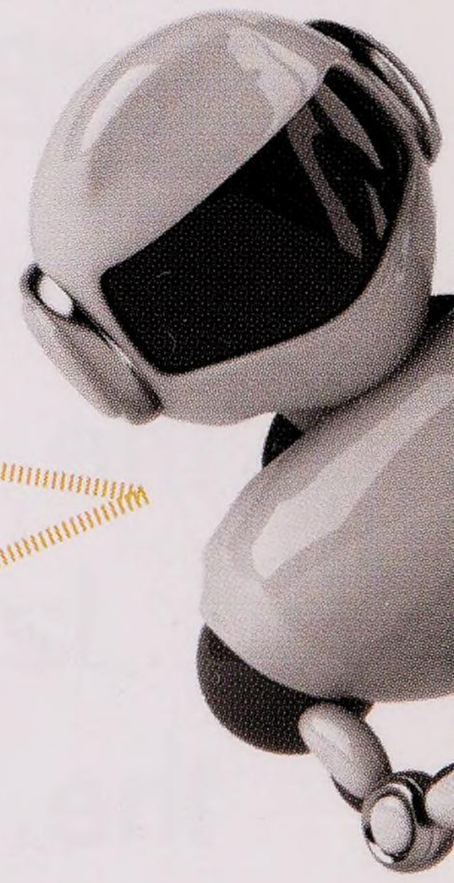
"*Memphis* has landed," Alex said to CapCom.

Lem, Alex, and Izzy set up the base first. They then started exploring. They set off on their quad bikes, which were specially designed for moving over the rocky Martian ground.

In a few hours, they reached the edge of the great canyon, Valles Marineris [VAL-less mar-uh-NAIR-iss].

Alex quickly set up
the monitoring equipment.
"I'm glad we have our suits on,"
said Alex. "The readings show
high levels of carbon dioxide.
We couldn't breathe on
our own in this thin air."
"We would choke on the fine
dust, too," added Lem.

The canyon **Valles Marineris** is 2,500 miles (4,000 km) long and 4 miles (7 km) deep. This canyon is the length of the USA and seven times deeper than the Grand Canyon.



Meanwhile, Lem and Izzy unpacked and built the glider. Izzy strapped herself in and switched on the video camera.

"Be careful of the strong winds," said Lem through the suit's radio.

Izzy lifted off and flew over the edge. The ground dropped away into the darkness of a deep gap.

She soared along the canyon,
using the uplift of the swirling,
whirling wind currents.
She swooped over the towering
rocks, worn away by the wind.
She glided over giant landslides
and huge sand dunes.

"That was awesome, guys!"
gasped Izzy, as she landed back
with Lem and Alex.

Suddenly, Alex spotted
a twirling and swirling twister
of dust, speeding across
the canyon.

"A colossal storm is coming
straight for us," said Alex.
"Let's get out of here—fast."

They jumped onto the quad bikes and sped away, but the twister was catching up with them.

"We're not going to make it back to base in time," cried Izzy. "We need to find some cover."

"What's that dark patch over there in the rocks?" asked Lem.

"That could be one of the Seven Sisters caves. Perfect!" called Alex.

They headed over to the cave as the twister sped closer.

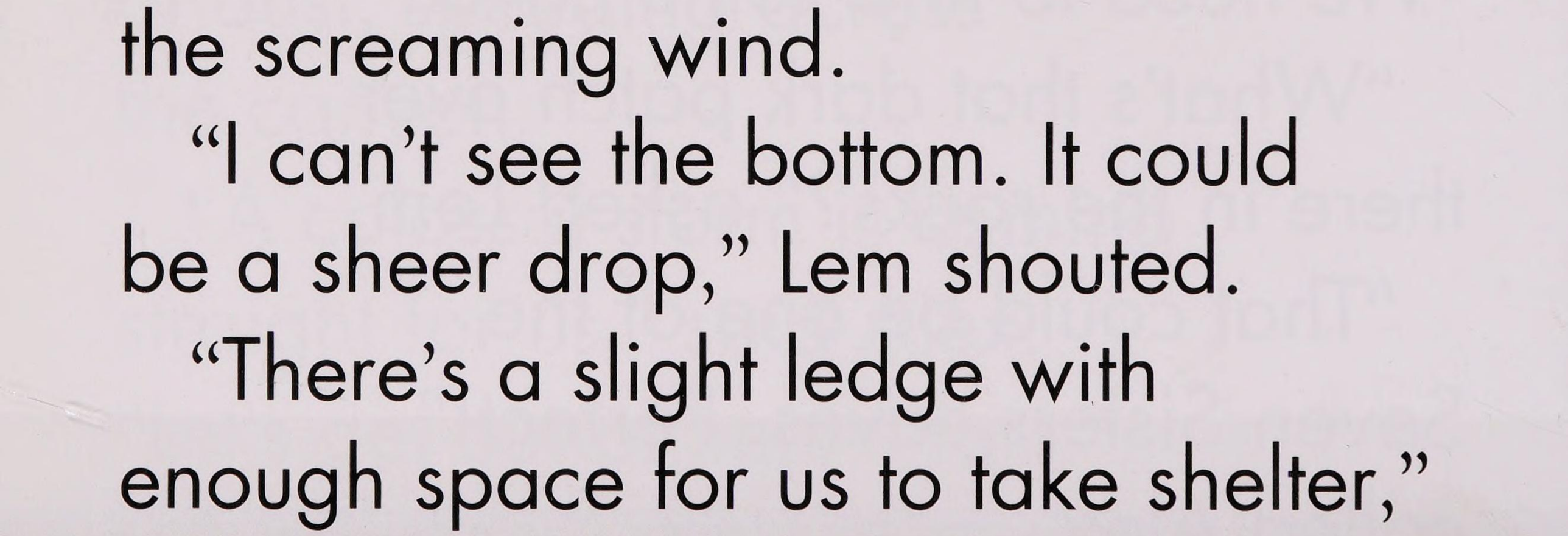
As they reached the cave, they could feel the wind around their suits. They were nearly blown off the bikes. Izzy grabbed Coconut in her hutch. They all staggered to the cave opening. The darkness of the cave loomed.

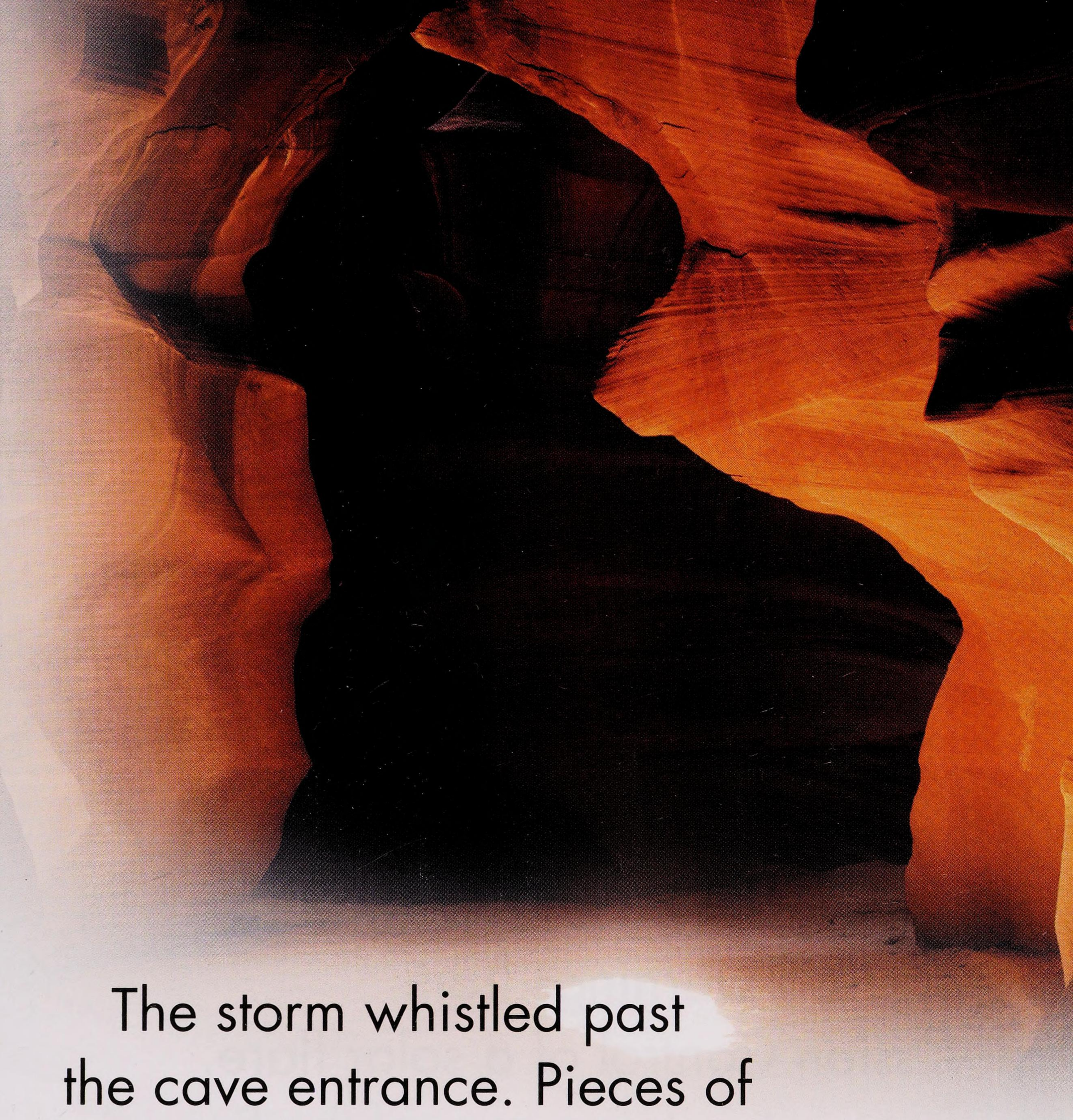
Lem led the way as they entered the cave carefully.

"How far down does it go?" asked Alex, shouting over the screaming wind.

"I can't see the bottom. It could be a sheer drop," Lem shouted.

"There's a slight ledge with enough space for us to take shelter," suggested Izzy.





The storm whistled past the cave entrance. Pieces of dust and rocks were thrown into the cave. They just missed the cowering astronauts. They waited until the twister had passed before returning to the base.

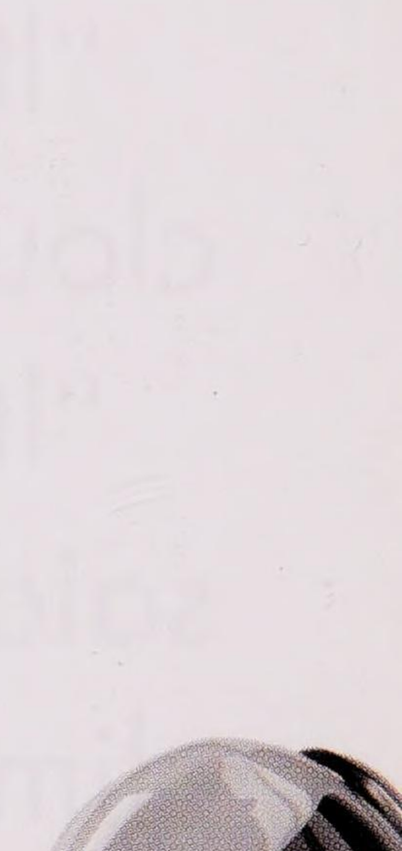
Solar flares are sudden bursts of energy from the Sun that then travel through the solar system.

For the next few days, the astronauts were unable to leave the base. They had received warnings from Mission Control of a solar flare. These extra-strong rays of the Sun could kill them because the Martian atmosphere would not protect them as Earth's does.

Finally, CapCom gave them the all clear.

Lem, Izzy, and Alex set off eagerly on their quad bikes. This time, they headed for the North Pole. They had changed the bikes' wheels to the ones that could grip on sand dunes. It took them over half the day to cover the distance.

Mars is very cold. The **North Pole** is covered by dry ice and water ice. Dry ice is frozen carbon dioxide.



Alex set up the monitors right away to measure the depth of the dry ice.

"It's like stepping through clouds," remarked Izzy.

"It's hard to get any grip," said Lem, as he struggled to climb an arch-shaped sand dune. He slid back with each step he took.

"I'm not surprised. There's a layer of slippery sand and dust below this dry ice," replied Izzy.

Suddenly, the CapCom radio beeped.

"Hey guys! There's an asteroid coming your way. We estimate impact will be in less than twelve hours. You need to get off Mars and back to *Ramesses* NOW."

"Message received and understood," said Lem, urgently. "We'll head back to *Memphis* right away."

Asteroids [AS-ter-oids] are space rocks. There is a ring of millions of asteroids between Mars and the next outer planet, Jupiter.

The team sped back to base.

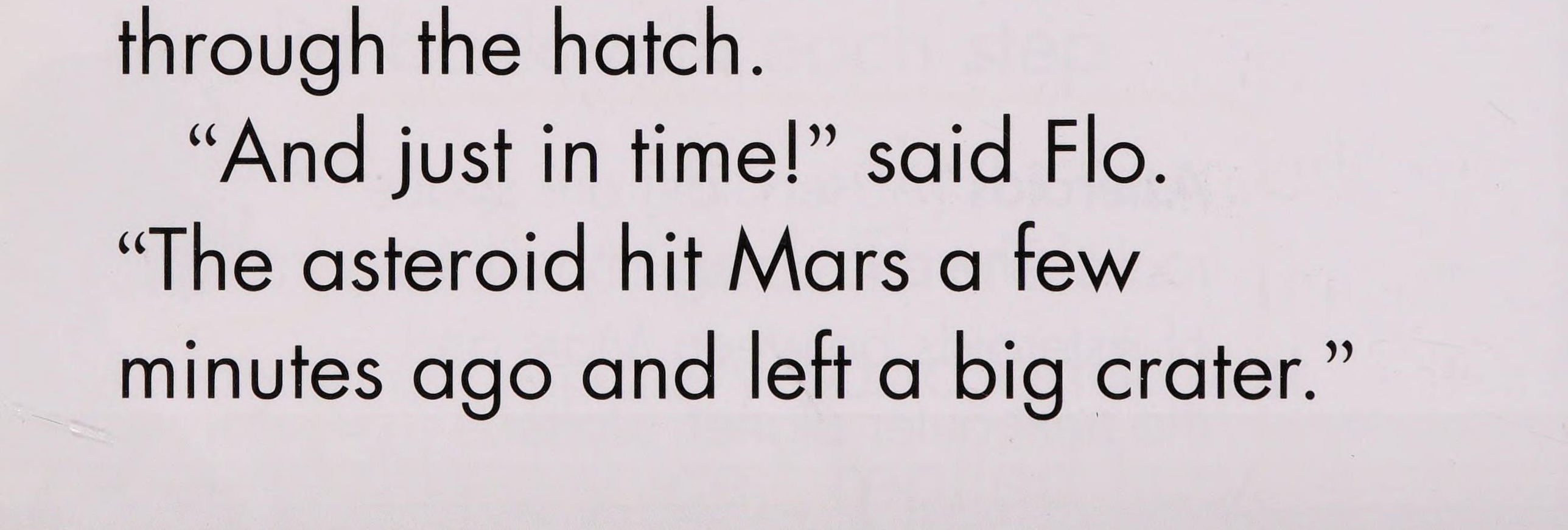
Without delay, they climbed into *Memphis*. Izzy placed Coconut safely inside her hutch in the hold.

Alex sat at the controls and fired up the booster rockets. *Memphis* rumbled as it lifted off the red planet.

On *Ramesses*, Flo and Ned were ready to meet them.

"Welcome back," they cried, as Alex, Lem, and Izzy appeared through the hatch.

"And just in time!" said Flo. "The asteroid hit Mars a few minutes ago and left a big crater."



"Mission Control has given us the go-ahead to continue the mission," said Ned, happily. "Next stop: Jupiter!"

Mars Data File

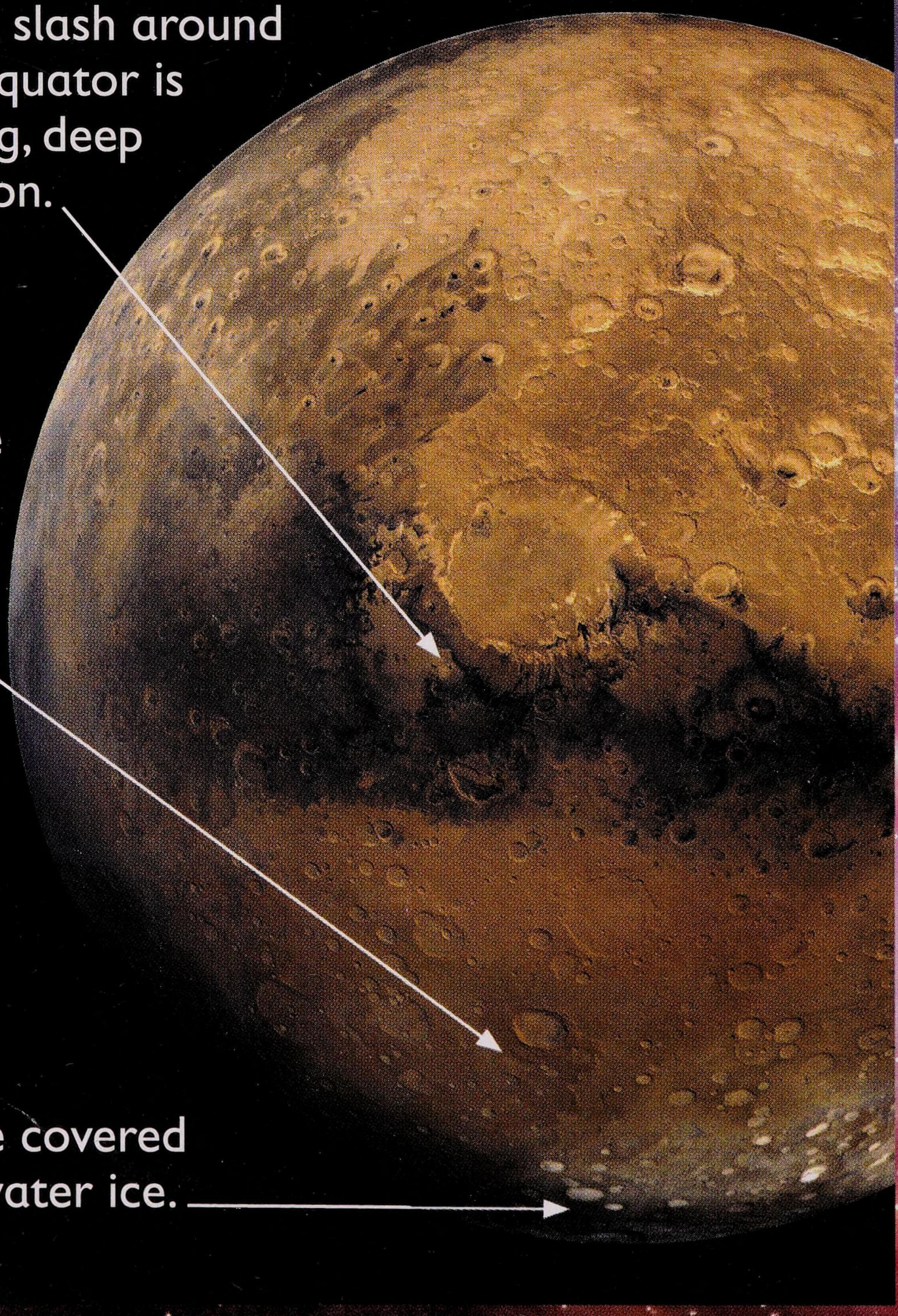
Location: fourth planet from the Sun

Landscape: rocky, barren, rust red, iron-rich ground

Size: just over half the size of Earth

Length of days: 24.6 Earth hours

Length of year: 687 Earth days


Dark slash around the equator is a long, deep canyon.
Dark circles are vast volcanoes; light ones are craters.
Frosty poles are covered in dry ice and water ice.

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Through the letters of a squire to his sister, learn about life in a medieval castle during peacetime and war.

Level 2 The Great Panda Tale

The zoo is getting ready to welcome a new panda baby. Join the excitement as Louise tells of her most amazing summer as a member of the zoo crew. What will the newborn panda look like?

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Experience the trip of a lifetime on an African safari as recorded in Katie's diary. Share her excitement at seeing wild animals up close.

Level 3 Rain Forest Explorer

Through her blog, Zoe shares the thrill and narrow escapes as she travels through the Amazon rain forest to her Uncle's Research Station. What will she discover?

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Blanche, Harry, Ash, and Moby are the sharks who live on the reef. Enjoy their encounters with the shark visitors that come passing through.

DK READERS

Join five astronauts on a mission to explore the planets of the solar system. First stop—Mars.

DK READERS

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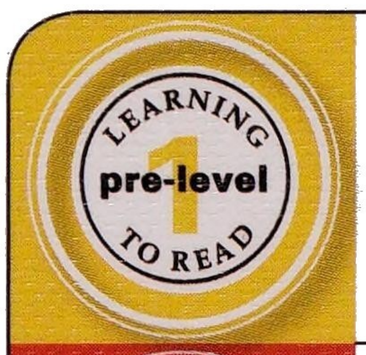
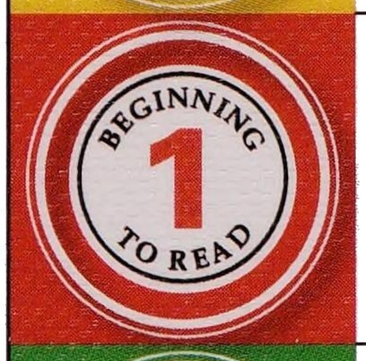


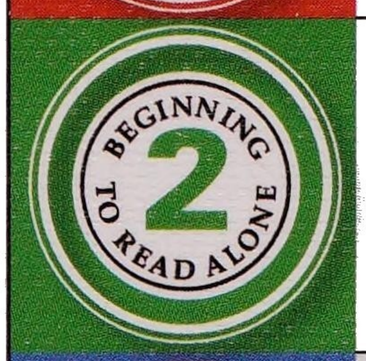
Learning to read

- High-frequency words
- Picture word strips, picture glossary, and simple index
- Labels to introduce and reinforce vocabulary
- High level of adult participation helpful



Beginning to read

- Simple sentences and limited vocabulary
- Picture glossary and simple index
- Adult participation helpful



Beginning to read alone

- Longer sentences and increased vocabulary
- Information boxes full of extra fun facts
- Simple index
- Occasional adult participation helpful

Reading alone

- More complex sentence structure
- Information boxes and alphabetical glossary
- Comprehensive index

Proficient readers

- Rich vocabulary and challenging sentence structure
- Additional information and alphabetical glossary
- Comprehensive index

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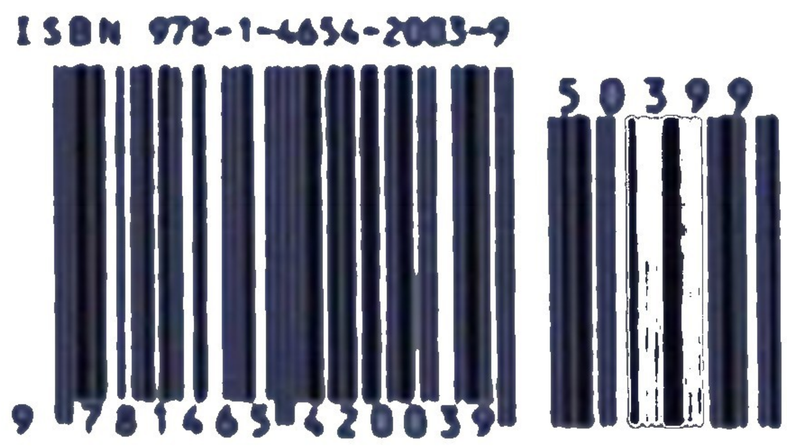
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